

Scientific Note

**THE FIRST NORTH AMERICAN RECORD FOR THE ANT
PHEIDOLE FERVENS FR. SMITH (HYMENOPTERA:
FORMICIDAE)**

Pheidole fervens (Fr. Smith) is a small myrmicine ant whose distribution is: Japan (southern part of Kyushu, Ryukyus), Sri Lanka, Burma, Singapore, China, Java, Borneo, Taiwan, and Oceania (Ogata, K. 1982. Kontyu, 50: 189–197.) It is spottily distributed in the Pacific region, including Hawaii where it has apparently been spread by human commerce (Westview Press, Reimer, N. et al 1990. Chap. 5 in Applied myrmecology: A world perspective). On 24 Aug 1995, I discovered several colonies of these ants nesting outdoors in downtown Los Angeles (The Bradbury Building 304 N. Broadway, northwest corner of Third and Broadway south to 364 N. Broadway and also around the corner on third street to the northeast side of Spring Street). On a subsequent return trip to the site on 27 Dec 1995 the ants were also nesting on the northeast side of Broadway from Third and Broadway to 315 N. Broadway. At these sites the nests were established in the sidewalk and the pavement in cracks and along the sides of buildings. The workers forage in columns from nest to nest indicating that they are possibly polydomous (occupy multiple nests). My observations represent the first introduction of this ant in North America (E.O. Wilson pers. comm.)

From my observations, it appears that *P. fervens* is primarily a scavenger because the workers were observed carrying the remains of dead insects and scraps from human foodstuffs. They probably will prey on any live insects they can overcome, and they possibly also feed on seeds.

Like our native *Pheidole* (Gregg, R. E. 1958. J.N.Y. Entomol. Soc., 66: 7–48.) this species has a dimorphic worker caste; a light brown minor worker 2–2.25 mm in length, and a larger, darker major, or soldier caste about 3.5 mm long that is more robust with a disproportionately larger and more massive head.

The pest potential of this ant is probably slight, although it appears to be opportunistic and adaptable to disturbed habitats. I suspect competition from the two most common ants in the urban areas of the Los Angeles basin, the Argentine ant, *Linepithema humile* (Mayr) and the native Southern fire ant *Solenopsis xyloni* (McCook), will most likely hinder the spread of *P. fervens*. I suspect the infestation of this new exotic ant is fairly recent because their populations are only in a two-block area.

Material examined—USA. CALIFORNIA LOS ANGELES CO.: Downtown Los Angeles: on 24 Aug 1995 and 27 Dec 1995. M. J. Martinez.

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